

Office of The Governor, J.B. Pritzker
Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Commission

December 05, 2020

Dear Deputy Governor Ruiz and Funding Commissioners,

On behalf of the Illinois Early Childhood Funding Coalition, we thank you for leading the effort to make ours the best state in the nation for raising young children. We applaud the work of the *Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Commission (Commission)* to make recommendations to ensure equitable access to high-quality services for all Illinois children.

The near final recommendations reflect the Governor's edict to "be bold," and yet the results of that bold action come during an extremely difficult financial crisis, global health pandemic, and a moment of racial reckoning within all aspects of our lives and institutions of government. **We believe that boldness of vision can co-exist with challenging times.**

In this spirit, below we propose a set of steps in the transition to implementation planning that will start us on the road to systemic transformation of the early childhood education and care infrastructure. **With the reality of challenging circumstances in mind, we implore the Governor to stay the bold course and begin with concrete actions that move us closer to the ideal future.**

Recommended Next Steps

In light of the timeline delay and to maintain momentum and trust, the Governor should launch a second phase of this work through an Implementation Planning Task Force (Task Force). **Implementation planning is where success will be won or lost, racial equity achieved or set aside.** The Task Force should include a diverse set of stakeholders that represent the system, including: a subset of the Commissioners, for continuity; state government leaders; non-profit and community leaders; legislators; experts in the field; and new voices of parents, providers, and educators. The work should begin and continue with a racial equity agenda and framework and should include broad stakeholder engagement.

Clearly establishing this next phase of work will grant us the time to get the preliminary implementation steps right and ensure racial equity is deeply embedded in the path forward.

Specific steps that can be taken over the next 12 months to begin the desired transformation include:

- Publicly acknowledge and show support for the Commission's work and recommendations some public forum (e.g., budget address, press conference);
- Issue an Executive Order to establish an Early Childhood Education and Care Implementation Planning Task Force, comprised of public and private partners, charged with crafting a detailed implementation plan that begins with racial equity and addresses the technical and policy issues required to bring recommendations to life;
- Fund staff to support the work of the taskforce, including external consultants for project management, staffing, and consultants for racial equity project management, potentially with unspent federal Preschool Development Grant (B-5) funds;

- Engage additional legislative leaders on the Commission's efforts, including the Black Caucus;
- Designate a high-level person in the Governor's Office to be accountable and responsible for driving the implementation planning process;
- Finalize Commission recommendations no later than March 2021;
- Charge state agencies with prioritizing implementing the Commission recommendations.

We submit this letter in the spirit of partnership. No one could have foreseen COVID-19, or the havoc it has wreaked on families, social services systems, and our state budget — not to mention the dedication of time it has demanded from the Governor and his Administration.

We will close with sincere appreciation for your leadership and for the hard work of the Commission to imagine a future that more supports our youngest citizens. Now is the time to stay the course. We are ready to work with you in any way we can.

Respectfully,

The Early Childhood Funding Coalition

CY2021 Timeline

Below is a timeline for how the Commission might make recommendations and the State might begin planning for implementation.

December 2020	Commission Deliberations: As a part of Commission deliberations, the Commission discusses and recommends an implementation process, consistent with the Commission's charge to "....advise the Governor in planning and implementing these recommendations."
January 2021	Briefing Governor State of the State: Governor shares/mentions the Commission recommendations and report in State of the State, with a frame of multi-year implementation plan that will ramp up over time with the State's economic recovery Taskforce Support: Governor's Office secures funding and a plan for staffing an Implementation Planning Task Force
February 2021	Governor's Budget Address: Governor mentions modest funding for an Implementation Task Force over the next 10 months. (Potentially Preschool Development Grant Funding, if available) Taskforce Funding: Work with ILGA and Black Caucus to agree on modest budget for implementation phase.
March 2021	Recommendations: The Commission submits its recommendations, which include a charge for implementation planning phase of this work (April 2021 – January 2022), to the Governor. Executive Order: An Executive Order is issued, to establish the ECEC Implementation Planning Task Force, possibly in partnership with legislative leaders Consultant and Staffing: Governor's Office identifies (or maintains) internal staff responsible for transition and implementation planning. Governor's Office brings on a change management consultant to stand up the Implementation Planning Task Force, engage stakeholders, ensure racial equity analyses are an integral part of planning, and work with internal government entities to plan for implementation of the recommendations. Launch Implementation Taskforce: Launch the Taskforce to advise on issues related to implementation in the short- and long-term and lay the groundwork for new governance, align standards and accountability structures, vetting feasibility of recommendations, etc.
January 2022	Recommendations: Implementation Planning Task Force makes recommendations to the Governor